



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

July 10, 2009

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

Mickey's Blog: Run State Spending Thru the Hot Cycle

With the legislature in recess, I have been meeting with the Budget Director and House and Senate appropriation leaders to find a way to gracefully shrink the size of state government to fit the available revenues. As you might guess, revenues have been shrinking faster than a wool sweater in a hot wash.

Don't try that one at home. I have, and it yields small results. Perhaps we could apply that approach to the state's budget.

Because of the recession, the state's revenues are way down, so trimming spending is an unpleasant but unavoidable task. It is human nature to try to avoid unpleasant tasks, but as one of my Senate Republican colleagues likes to say, bad news doesn't improve with age. With the way the state's revenues are contracting, the bad news keeps getting worse.

Progress in the discussions has been slow, because members keep hoping for some new option to emerge besides making the painful cuts. There have been discussions about tax restructuring; cutting tax expenditures, credits, and loopholes; hopes for additional Federal stimulus money; and a general reorganization of government. These are important issues, but at the end of the day, we have to have a budget by October 1st, and some of these ideas would take more time and are of uncertain prospects.

Almost no one wants to raise taxes in this economy. I certainly do not. I think my constituents rightly expect me to make cuts. They expect the government to make cuts just as they have had to make painful cuts, and adjust to reduced wages and assets, in their own lives. Why should government be exempt? But the status quo dies hard.

I must have received over 100 emails this week from people who wished to avoid the 100 layoffs of state police troopers. Most said just restore the spending, without suggesting where the money should

come from. But some offered alternatives, such as cutting some other budget, or not moving into the new state police building.

The first proposal violates the concept of shared sacrifice. We have vowed at the table that everyone, every department, every special interest group, should feel the pain of the budget reductions. I have often said, show me a department we didn't cut, and I will go back and cut them, because we tried to hit everyone. If we missed somebody, that's an oversight that will be addressed soon.

I will get my knife back out.

So to every department that says cut someone else, we say, "Stop. We are talking about *your* department. Show me how you can run your department on fewer dollars." If they can't do it, we will have to find someone who can, because the money isn't there.

The supposed savings from not moving into the building is like you inviting friends over for dinner, going to the store and buying steaks, cooking them on the grill, and then announcing at dinnertime that everyone will have to eat cereal because you just got a call that you are laid off.

It's too late on that one. Eat the steaks; turn off the AC; and start cutting out the cable tv, the lattes, the cell phones, and the trips after dinner for ice cream.

There are people in this area who have had to cut out a lot more.

There was one real alternative to the state police layoffs. The state imposed up to 6 furlough days on all its employees. That's a day off without pay, and it saved millions. Government works a little slower, but that's the speed we can afford right now. Contractually, the state could not impose the furlough days on the troopers union, but was required to bargain. The state offered to rescind the layoffs if the troopers would agree to about 4 furlough days per employee. The union held a vote and rejected the idea. Consequently, the state laid off the 100 troopers, including recent hires that we just put through training school.

So much for solidarity forever.

What makes that particularly frustrating is the fact that the state continues to offer state police employees a deferred retirement, or DROP program, that allows retirement-eligible employees to collect their pension and work at the same time. In effect, it is an incentive to people to not retire, at a time when the state needs to shed employees.

I have been calling for an end to the DROP program for months. How can we allow some people to double dip while we lay off people we just trained and hired?

In what world does that make sense?

In Lansing.

It's time for a hot wash.

Mickey's Ends and Notes

GOVERNOR GRANHOLM SIGNS COBO BILLS

Governor Granholm recently signed into a law a package of legislation that should clear the way for Detroit's Cobo Center to remain the home of the North American International Auto Show.

The measures will allow for a regional authority to lease the convention center in downtown in order to expand and improve the facility. Officials with the auto show had warned that if changes were not made to the center, they could move the show to Chicago, Los Angeles, or another city. The auto show is responsible for as much as \$500 million in economic activity annually.

The City of Detroit would have until August 1 to reject the state expansion plan. A similar plan was scuttled by the council in February, but unlike that proposal the new one gives Mayor Dave Bing the power to veto a council rejection. If Detroit did reject the plan, the new legislation would allow Oakland County to use tax dollars to pay for an alternate convention site to house the international auto show.

MPSC OFFERS "BEAT THE HEAT AND SAVE" TIPS

With the arrival of hot temperatures, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) reminds utility customers that there are a variety of things they can do to lower electric bills. To lower bills, you should:

- Seal air leaks around doors and windows.
- Clean air conditioner filters and coils every month to make them more energy efficient.
- Install a programmable thermostat. Setting it 10 degrees warmer when not at home can save 3 to 5 percent on electric bills
- Use fans- they can make the use of an air conditioner unnecessary. Ceiling fans, for example, can make a room feel six to seven degrees cooler.
- Lower the temperature on the hot water heater to 120 degrees, a setting comfortable for most uses.
- Plant leafy trees that shield the house from direct sunlight, keeping temperatures down. In addition, planting drought-resistant perennials, shrubs, and trees can save on water bills.
- Unplug certain appliances when not in use. Computers, cell phone chargers, MP3 players, televisions, VCRs, DVD players, stereos, and microwave ovens all use energy when plugged into electric outlets.

HELP IS OUT THERE: STATE AND LOCAL JOB PROGRAMS FOR JOB SEEKERS

The recent Chrysler and General Motors bankruptcies mean that even more families will need job search and family assistance programs. There is a lot of help available for job seekers, but unfortunately many people don't know how to access these programs. I hope that readers will find the following information helpful. These programs are available for job seekers:

- Career Education and Workforce Programs (Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth). For job programs for veterans, people transitioning from welfare to work, specialized job placement programs, and dislocated/laid off worker assistance, visit the website at <http://www.michigan.gov/mdcd/0,1607,7-122-1679---,00.html>.
- Rapid Response Program (Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth): 1-517-373-6234. This program begins when Rapid Response is notified of a plant closing or mass lay-off, and helps people with their job search and new training they may need. Visit the website at http://www.michigan.gov/mdcd/0,1607,7-122-1678_2665---,00.html.

- The Macomb County Small Business and Technology Development Center provides counseling, training, research, and advocacy for new ventures, new start-up businesses, and existing small businesses. You can contact them at SBTDC@macombcountymi.gov or by calling 1-586-469-5118.
- Unemployment Insurance Agency. To file your claim by phone call 1-866-500-0017. To inquire about your claim, call 1-866-500-0017, and press 3. To find answers to general questions about unemployment benefits and to print forms, log on to www.michigan.gov/uia.
- Michigan Talent Bank: 1-888-253-6855. This site lists new job openings monthly and allows people to post their resume. Visit the website at: https://www.michworks.org/mtb/user/MTB_EMPL.EntryMainPage.
- The United Way of Southeastern Michigan. The United Way runs the 211 Help Line which connects people with helpful services just as 911 connects people with emergency services. People simply dial 211 (or 1-800-552-1183) and use the United Way as their link to local and state programs. 211 can make referrals to agencies that can help with job training, rent, mortgage payments, and the cost of food or prescriptions. 211 is a lifeline for people in difficult situations trying to navigate their way through local and state programs.

STATE WARNS UNEMPLOYED WORKERS TO AVOID SCAM UNEMPLOYMENT WEBSITES

The Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) is warning unemployed workers against using websites that charge fees to file their unemployment benefits claims. Officials also are telling workers to be wary of e-mails from websites that offer to set up direct deposit accounts for unemployment benefits. The UIA does not charge any fees to those filing claims for unemployment benefits, and it already offers direct deposit and debit cards as payment options for benefit payments.

The only website unemployed workers should use is the site that belongs to the state's Unemployment Insurance Agency at www.michigan.gov/uia. The agency is aware of at least one website that is offering a pre-paid Visa card for those who have their unemployment benefit payments directly deposited onto the card. Michigan's website is fee-free, and the state works closely with the well-know Chase Bank, which administers the direct deposit and debit card payment options. These filing sites show up when an individual searches for information on how to file for unemployment benefits, and charge up to \$20 to file an individual's unemployment claim. Many of these unofficial and fraudulent sites look official and may have a ".us" domain in their web address. Using these sites can delay a person's benefits and also puts the user at risk for identity theft. Unemployed workers should never enter their personal information for unemployment benefits onto a non-state-sponsored website.

TOBACCO QUIT LINE AVAILABLE TO HELP

The Michigan Tobacco Quit Line is available to assist Michigan residents who want to take advantage of the program to help them quit smoking and using other tobacco products. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can be accessed via the phone number 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669). Most of the quit-lines were shutdown in March after an unprecedented number of callers flooded the lines when nicotine replacement products were offered free of charge. However, due to a lack of funding, free nicotine replacement products such as nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges will not be available.

Coffee Hours

*In response to requests from constituents, I have added coffee hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

July 27 7-8 p.m. Clinton-Macomb Public Library (35891 South Gratiot) Clinton Township	August 31 1:30-2:30 p.m. Senator Switalski's District Office (31513 Gratiot, Suite B) Roseville
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Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times-check local listings
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

Contact My Office

Website: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski>

Email: senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov

Lansing Office

Senator Mickey Switalski
Senate District 10
410 Farnum
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909

(866) 303-0110 toll free
(517) 373-7315
Fax-(517) 373-3126

District Office

31513 Gratiot, Suite B
Roseville, MI 48066

Monday through Friday
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

(586) 294-0925 phone
Fax- (586) 294-0985